



OFFICE OF
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**Robert
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Sheriff-Coroner

NEWS RELEASE

It is with great concern for the public's safety that the Sheriff of San Joaquin County has requested and received authorization from the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors for the closure of the Mokelumne River to all boating / rafting traffic between the McIntire Road Fish Hatchery and the Bruella Road Bridge as well as from the Woodbridge Dam to Peltier Road. Due to the unusually high release of water into the lower Mokelumne River from Camanche Dam, the Mokelumne River has become extremely hazardous to rafters and other boating traffic.

According to officials of East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), as a result of the large snow pack in the Mokelumne watershed, EBMUD is anticipating water release from Camanche into the lower Mokelumne as follows:

2500 cubic feet per second (cfs) in June
1800 cfs in July
1200 cfs in August

During the same period last year the amounts were:

500 cfs
350 cfs
325 cfs

This indicates water releases four to five times greater than last year. Exacerbating the circumstances further is that the water temperature is at or around 55 degrees and is expected to become significantly swifter, cause a large vegetation growth that can become a dangerous obstacle to boating traffic and as well, draw more recreational rafters and boaters to the area. According to the Park Ranger of the recreation area, it is common to have between 250 and 500 people rafting down the river on the weekends throughout the summer months. As previously stated, those numbers increase during the years with higher water releases.

Since Memorial Day Weekend, the Sheriff's Office is aware of one drowning death in the water and 13 rafters rescued by the fire personnel and or Sheriff's personnel. There has also been one unreported rescue involving a family with small children. This has all occurred within a seven-day period. As the water conditions become more dangerous, we are concerned for the safety of the public, and the fact that the conditions will attract even more people to the area.

For those reasons stated, we recommended the closure of the Mokelumne River for the next 60 days pursuant to Harbor and Navigation Code 660c. After the 60 days we can re-evaluate the water situation and determine if it is safe enough to allow recreation on the mentioned waterways.

This action would fall in line with Resolutions by the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors in 1995 and 1997, which closed similar areas of the Mokelumne River in the interest of the public's safety and for the same reasons.

The San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office will be conducting extra patrols and taking a zero tolerance approach. Citations will be issued to violators who enter the above-mentioned waterways during the 60-day closure.

We cannot stress enough the importance of having and wearing a Life Jacket while enjoying our waterways in San Joaquin County.